

The “NAAFI”

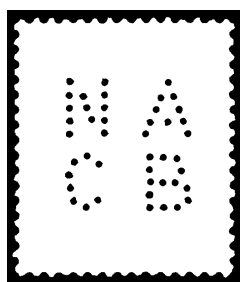
Roy Gault

The catalyst for this piece is **Derek Ransom** who saw a request for more information regarding ‘NAAFI’ perfin on G.B. Postage Stamps in his copy of the ‘**Forces Postal History Society**’ Bulletin. Again, the internet has come up trumps in providing some basic background information.

Although the provision of food for servicemen has always been taken for granted - ‘An army marches on its stomach’ - the truth is that the quality was often sub-standard, particularly in Victorian times.

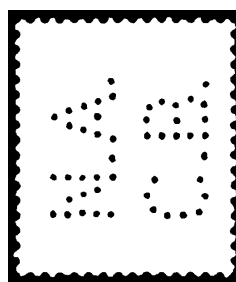
The story can be traced back to 1894 when the ‘**Canteen & Mess Co-operative Society Ltd**’ was formed specifically to improve the quality of ‘Army’ food. In typical ‘Co-operative Society’ fashion, good quality food & other requirements were bought in bulk and then sold on to local canteens. No doubt spurred on by the outbreak of WWI, the ‘**Expeditionary Forces Canteens**’ was formed in 1915 by combining the ‘C&MCS’ and the resources of a ‘trading partner’. At home an official (rather than local) canteen organisation known as the ‘**Army Canteen Committee**’ was set up on the 1st January 1917. The name was changed again in June 1917 to the ‘**Navy & Army Canteen Board**’, when the Navy ‘came aboard’.

1917-1920



N0073.01

1917-1920

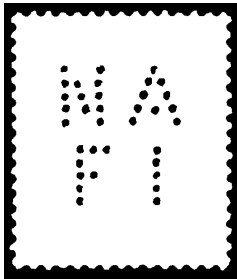


N0075.01

Based on the fact that there are no perfins known with the correct time frame on G.B. Postage Stamps with the letters “CMCS”, “EFC”, and “ACC”, it would appear that it was the ‘Navy & Army Canteen Board’ who first used perfins. Two are known - “NA/CB” was used in Liverpool, and “N.A./C.B.” in London.

The next (and last) name change came on 1st January 1921, when the Royal Air Force (the Royal Flying Corps in WWI) joined the organisation. It became known as the ‘**Navy, Army & Air Force Institutes**’, giving us the now familiar “**NAAFI**” acronym. Strangely all five letters were never used on Perfins, being shortened to either “NA/FI” or “NA/A”. In contrast to the two early dies, which are quite rare, this next group of five are fairly plentiful.

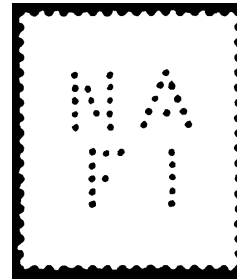
1921-1936



N0090.02



1924-1939

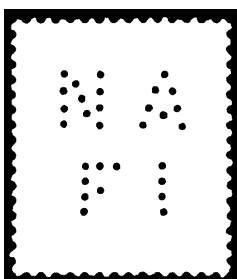


N0090.02a

N0090.02 has been positively identified (Basil St, London SW3),
whereas N0090.02a is only a suspected identity.

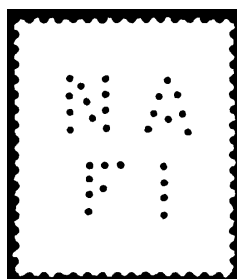
For some as yet unexplained reason, around the start of WWII, J Sloper & Co embarked on a project to replace their old dies, with 5-pin high letters, with 4-pin high versions. As a consequence, we see the appearance c1939 of N0090.01bM. The Sloper m/s ledger indicates that this die was multiheaded, 12x1. However, it was probably destroyed in the “Blitz” on Sloper’s premises in May 1941, and replaced almost immediately by another 12x1 multiheaded die, N0090.01M.

1939-1941



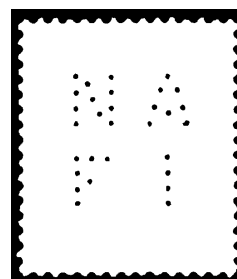
N0090.01bM

1941-1980



N0090.01M

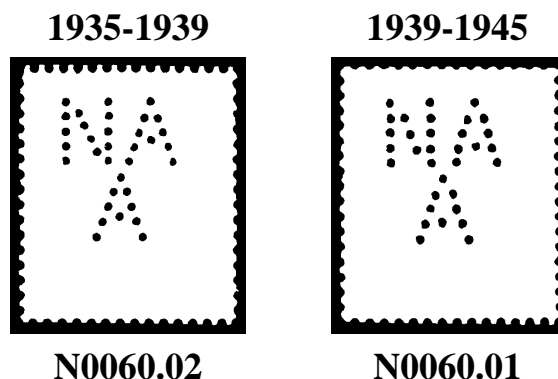
1950-1965



N0090.01a

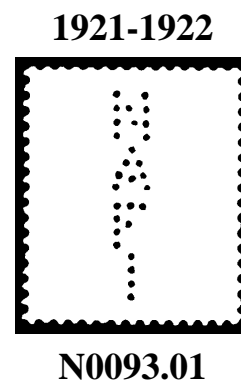
Post WWII, Sloper’s also used a single headed die to initial (mainly)
large format stamps, which is catalogued as N0090.01a.

The simplified “NA/A” format can be found on two dies, N0060.01/02, both of which were used in a German ‘POKO’ Affixer using vertical delivery coils.



The earlier die has been positively identified as having been used by the ‘Navy, Army & Air Force Institutes’ at their H/O in Imperial Court, Kennington Lane, London SE11. The later die is a suspected identity based on London SE11 postmarks.

This last pattern, shown out of order, has the usual four letters and *may* relate to the “NAAFI”. It is somewhat rare, having been reported on only one example, a 1d KGV Typograph, postmarked Dublin, 23rd February 1922.



Catalogue No.	Letters	Die in use	Earliest Date	Latest Date
N0060.01	NA/A	1939-1945	11 July 1940	17 Apr 1943
N0060.02	NA/A	1935-1939	---	---
N0073.01	NA/CB	1917-1920	22 Nov 1917	---
N0075.01	N.A./C.B.	1917-1920	12 Oct 1920	---
N0090.01M	NA/FI	1941-1980	26 Aug 1942	18 July 1979
N0090.01a	NA/FI	1950-1965	... 1953	---
N0090.01bM	NA/FI	1939-1941	14 Sep 1940	---
N0090.02	NA/FI	1921-1936	5 Jan 1935	21 Feb 1935
N0090.02a	NA/FI	1924-1939	30 June 1937	26 Aug 1939
N0093.01	N/A/F/I	1921-1922	23 Feb 1922	---

If anyone can extend our knowledge of this small group of Perfin's by reporting earlier/later dates than those shown above,
I would be pleased to hear from you.